

coronavirus pandemic . . . featuring extensive propaganda and censorship efforts aimed at mollifying public anger and suppressing criticism against missteps in the government's initial response.

"In Monday's trial, Ms. Zhang said she regarded the proceeding, against her as illegitimate . . ."

I especially regret the Communist Party repression of the Chinese people because my father, First Lieutenant Hugh Wilson, served in China during World War II in the Flying Tigers where I grew up with his affection for the Chinese people and their extraordinary culture.

In conclusion, God Bless our Troops and we will never forget September 11th in the Global War on Terrorism.

ADOPTING THE RULES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE 117TH CONGRESS

SPEECH OF

HON. JENNIFFER GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN

OF PUERTO RICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, January 4, 2021

Miss GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Madam Speaker, I express my opposition to the proposed House Rules governing the 117th Congress.

As the Congresswoman for Puerto Rico, I represent 3.2 million Puerto Ricans, American citizens by birth since 1917. Yet as such I have no vote on passage of measures.

While House Resolution 8 will continue to provide the Delegates and the Resident Commissioner a vote in the Committee of the Whole, the vote will only count if the votes cast are not deciding votes.

If Delegates or the Resident Commissioner, while in the Committee of the Whole, cast deciding votes, the measure will receive a re-vote without any delegate or Resident Commissioner casting a vote during the second vote.

This is just a reflection of a continued injustice and a step that does little or nothing to address it.

More than a symbolic expression, my constituents need equal standing.

This past November, Puerto Ricans exercised their choice by casting 623,053 votes for statehood, capturing 52-percent of the total vote. This referendum was a straight yes-no question as to the ultimate will of the Puerto Rican voters.

Puerto Rico demands equality. My constituents voted for equal voting representation in the U.S. House of Representatives and the United States Senate, which can only be achieved through statehood.

Puerto Rico would have at least four U.S. Representatives in the House and the Constitutionally mandated two Senators when it becomes a state. This would give the island six electoral votes during a Presidential election cycle.

And still, there are those who still try to subvert the will of the voters who actually live in the island.

All the crises that Puerto Rico has suffered during the past four years, including hurricanes, earthquakes, the coronavirus pandemic, and the fiscal crisis, demonstrate the urgency of achieving equality with the states.

That is why statehood cannot wait any longer. The island must receive the same

treatment that is received in the rest of the nation. There is strength in the Union, particularly in moments of collective crisis.

The territorial status is also primarily responsible for the island's economic underdevelopment and decline.

According to the Census there are 5.4 million Puerto Ricans living in the rest of the United States as opposed to 3.26 million living on the island—a difference of 2.1 million people, driven by the lack of opportunity.

It's a pleasure to serve in this House, the most diverse in its history. However, we are failing to address the pressing issue of Puerto Rico's need for real, not symbolic votes in Congress.

The island deserves equality, and my constituents deserve representation.

CONGRATULATING LARIMER COUNTY COMMISSIONER STEVE JOHNSON ON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. JOE NEGUSE

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Mr. NEGUSE. Madam Speaker, today I wish to recognize the incredible work and achievements of Larimer County Commissioner Steve Johnson. For 24 years, Steve has devoted himself to serving his community and the State of Colorado, including spending 12 years serving in the Colorado Legislature and 12 years serving as a Larimer County Commissioner.

Prior to becoming a Larimer County Commissioner, Mr. Johnson served in the Colorado House of Representatives for 6 years, during which time he served as the Majority Caucus Chairman. He followed that service with an equally long 6-year stint in the Colorado Senate, serving on the Joint Budget Committee and Senate Appropriations Committee.

While serving as Larimer County Commissioner, he helped the county's recovery efforts as Larimer County faced some of the largest natural disasters in the county's history. The High Park Fire in 2012, the One Hundred Year Flood in 2013, and the Cameron Peak Fire and COVID-19 in 2020 have caused extensive damage and posed great challenges to the county's leadership. Commissioner Johnson helped steer the community through these disasters with level-headed determination and a commitment to the people of Larimer County.

He was also instrumental in helping to pass the Behavioral Health Initiative, a measure which led to Larimer County being a leader in Colorado for providing mental health services and substance abuse care and increased available resources for his community.

After 24 years of public service, Commissioner Johnson certainly deserves a happy and restful retirement. On behalf of the people of Colorado's 2nd Congressional district, thank you Commissioner Johnson for your outstanding dedication to public service.

RECOGNIZING SHARON STARK FOR HER SERVICE AS DISTRICT DIRECTOR FOR THE 11TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Mr. CONNOLLY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor my dear friend and District Director, Sharon Stark, on her retirement after more than a decade of dedicated and faithful service to our community.

Mrs. Stark's strong work ethic started at a young age when she got her first job selling shoes at the age of 15. After college, she began her career as a bank teller and worked her way up to be a Vice President of Operations by the time she was 29. She then started a second career as Vice President of a Top 25 title company for residential and commercial real estate.

In 2005, Sharon was selected to be a member of Virginia's 11th Congressional District Democratic Committee where she served as the Treasurer for many years with our dear friend Chairman George Burke. Two years later, in 2007, she was named finance chair for George Barker's campaign for the Senate of Virginia. The success of the Barker campaign flipped control of the Senate and helped Democrats secure the majority.

Sharon has managed my Congressional district offices since 2009. Under her leadership, the office has established a stellar reputation for constituent services and community engagement.

It was during the depths of the 2008 financial crisis and the subsequent collapse of the housing market that Sharon demonstrated just how hard she was willing to fight for constituents. She put her considerable talent and expertise to work for our constituents. People came to our office at risk of being foreclosed upon, having their utilities turned off, not knowing where they would be sleeping the next night, and Sharon took up their cause. She fought with the banks, gave people hope where they saw none, and even went to the courthouse steps to prevent foreclosures. She saved people's homes and changed their lives for the better.

Since 2011, our offices have kept track of the financial assistance we have been able to secure for our constituents. This assistance includes helping constituents receive their refund from the IRS or benefits from the Veterans Administration, helping someone resolve their Social Security Disability Insurance claim, and other efforts that result in constituents receiving financial assistance owed to them. Over the past 9 years, Sharon and her team have helped our constituents obtain nearly \$20 million in one-time or retroactive benefits plus \$9 million per year in recurring benefits.

Sharon has organized countless events for the benefit of our constituents. She has established an Open Season event that brings together various health plan providers and industry experts to educate thousands of federal employees, retirees, survivor annuitants, and veterans on their health plan options for the coming year. Sharon spearheaded the annual Congressional Art Competition for VA-11 and has grown the event into something truly

memorable for the participants and their families. Students compete for more than \$1,000 in scholarship prizes and have the opportunity to see for the first time their own artwork in a professional gallery setting.

Sharon has also coordinated countless town halls, roundtables, fairs and festivals outreach booths, and numerous other community engagements. The events often grapple with serious topics such as gun control, the opioid epidemic, health care, and she has always striven to ensure that they are meaningful exchanges of information and viewpoints for attendees.

One particular area into which Sharon has thrown herself and her considerable energy is the Military Service Academy nomination process for VA-11. She organizes and coordinates the advisory boards from each service academy, sets the interview calendar, supports the deliberations, and in the end helps nominate the future military leaders of our nation. Under Sharon's leadership, our district is routinely in the top three nationally for having the most students accepted into one of the prestigious U.S. Military Academies. For Sharon, it is a labor of love and service to both our country and the promising young students who seek to serve their nation in uniform.

This past year as we endured the COVID-19 pandemic, Sharon once again stepped into the breach, deferring her retirement by working tirelessly to help constituents who have faced personal tragedies and financial hardships. During the pandemic, Sharon has helped small businesses secure desperately needed grants and loans, helped families resolve issues with economic impact payments, and made every effort to ensure that our constituents who were stuck abroad were able to make it back to the United States safely. In 2020 alone, Sharon and our staff were able to help more than 1,800 individuals overcome personal crises directly related to the global pandemic.

Madam Speaker, Sharon Stark is a model public servant and I ask my colleagues to join me in wishing Sharon Stark health and happiness as she concludes a distinguished career in service to her country and community. There are people who have their health, a roof over their head, or food on the table thanks to Sharon. I am proud to have had her lead my district offices for the past 13 years and represent me in our community. Our office, constituents, and district will miss her immensely; as will I, and I wish her nothing but the best in retirement in which she will be able to spend more time with her husband Seth, her daughter Christine, and her granddaughter Jacqueline. Job well done Sharon Stark.

OPPOSITION TO THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE OBJECTION

HON. RON KIND

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Mr. KIND. Madam Speaker, today is supposed to be a celebration of our democracy—the peaceful transfer of power in our Country. Instead we saw mob rule descend on our Nation's Capitol. That's why I rise today in defense of a pillar of our democracy—the right for a free and fair election decided by the will

of the voters and, ultimately, respected and accepted by the losing candidate and their supporters.

The other side can indulge in all the conspiracy theories they want, but when you involve the integrity of our elections in my home State of Wisconsin, well then I have a problem.

In our federal system of government, the administration of elections are controlled by our States—not Congress.

What happens in Wisconsin is up to Wisconsin—not Washington.

Our job in Congress is to count the electoral college votes, not overturn them.

Wisconsin has a long history of open, fair, and accurate elections because of the laws that our State has established and executed by 2,000 state and local officials, and countless volunteers, all who take their responsibility seriously with the highest form of honesty, integrity, fairness, and accuracy.

What is being attempted here tonight is an attempt to invalidate 3.3 million valid Wisconsin votes merely because their preferred candidate didn't win.

But if they succeed, democracy dies and dictatorship reigns.

The Trump campaign has filed state and federal court cases challenging the outcome of the vote in Wisconsin—all of which have been dismissed due to lack of any evidence of fraud.

Wisconsin Supreme Court Justice Brian Hagedorn, who was former Republican Governor Scott Walker's chief legal counsel, wrote in dismissing one of these challenges:

"We are invited to invalidate the entire presidential election in Wisconsin by declaring it 'null'—yes, the whole thing . . . this is a dangerous path we are being asked to tread. The loss of public trust in our constitutional order resulting from the exercise of this kind of judicial power would be incalculable."

And he is not alone in that assessment.

The former Republican Speaker of the House from Wisconsin, Paul Ryan, said in a statement:

"Efforts to reject the votes of the electoral college and sow doubt about Joe Biden's victory strike at the foundation of our republic.

It is difficult to conceive of a more anti-democratic and anti-conservative act than a federal intervention to overturn the results of state-certified elections and disenfranchise millions of Americans.

The fact that this effort will fail does not mean it will not do significant damage to American democracy."

He concluded by stating:

"The Trump campaign had ample opportunity to challenge election results, and those efforts failed from lack of evidence . . . Joe Biden's victory is entirely legitimate."

Or consider the third ranking Republican leader in this House, Rep. LIZ CHENEY who described this attempt as "deeply troubling".

She went on to state:

"This is directly at odds with the Constitution's clear text and our core beliefs as Republicans."

"Doing so" she said "Would be establishing a tyranny of Congress and stealing power from the States and the people in those States."

Finally consider what my friend and Republican colleague from Wisconsin, MIKE GALLAGHER, had to say about this:

"I just don't think we want to endorse the principle that January 6 is a legitimate forum for Congress to overturn the will of the States and the people . . . if you've endorsed that principle, then you've already destroyed the idea of American government. At least you've destroyed the conservative idea of American government."

What these Republican leaders understand is this—

If Congressional Members vote to reject valid Presidential electors for invalid reasons, There is nothing anyone can do about it.

The ugly truth is that, despite a nationwide vote, fenced in with legal and technical safeguards, after 244 years of history, the U.S. President is elected on the honor system of 535 Members of Congress, each sworn to preserve, protect, and defend our Constitution and our representative democracy enshrined in it.

It's not an oath to any individual or to any party.

Now it's easy to play war when you think that you're firing blanks, but these are not blanks being fired at our Constitution.

This is dangerous today because of the collateral damage that is being done to the sanctity of the ballot box.

It is also dangerous because it now provides a blueprint for next time.

President Trump will not be successful this time, but next time when some authoritarian wannabe takes a run at our Constitution, all bets are off.

We have a tendency in this Country to kick our Democracy around like it's a football—it's more like an egg, very fragile. You break it, good luck putting it back together again.

Please, do not put Donald Trump ahead of our Constitution, ahead of the rule of law, ahead of the sanctity of the ballot box.

Vote no on this attempt to overturn a valid election.

Vote no on this objection.

ELECTION IRREGULARITIES

HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Madam Speaker, after rigorous analysis and much reflection, I will not oppose the counting of certified electoral votes from any state.

I share some of the concerns about election irregularities. Today's proceedings give Congress the opportunity to raise concerns about alleged election wrongdoing in several states which I hope will ultimately lead to bipartisan state investigations and reform to ensure fair and free elections.

Today, however, Congress is tasked with counting the electoral votes sent by each state. Nullifying the electors of any state requires proof that electors were not "lawfully certified" according to state laws.

In early December, Attorney General William Barr told the Associated Press that "U.S. attorneys and FBI agents have been working to follow up specific complaints and information they've received, but 'to date, we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election.'"

All elections in the United States must be free and fair—any action to subvert, cheat,